PITTA

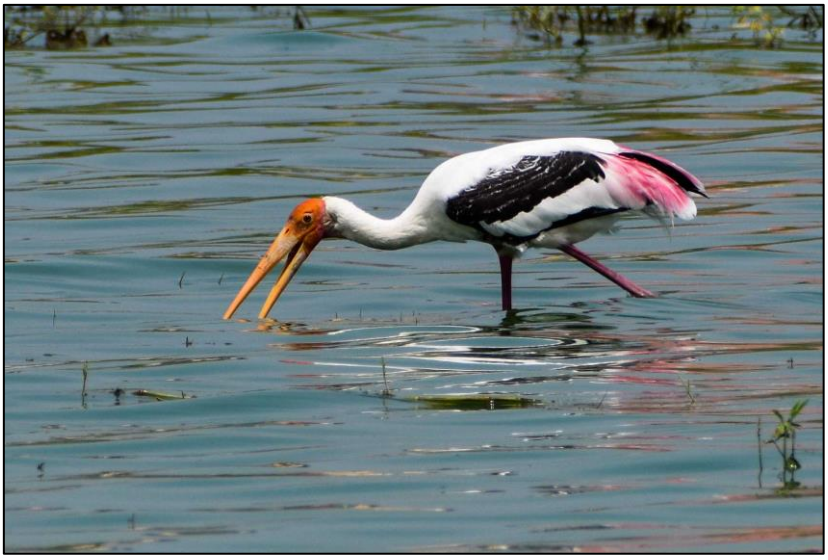
Newsletter of Deccan Birders (formerly Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh)
New Series Volume 17 Number 14 November 2020

DECCAN BIRDERS EVENTS

In light of the Corona virus (COVID-19) epidemic, all Deccan Birders Field Trips and Indoor Meetings are on hold until further notice. Details of upcoming activities will be communicated once the situation improves.

Trip Report: Ameenpur, October 3, 2020

Text & Photos: Abhinav Udupi



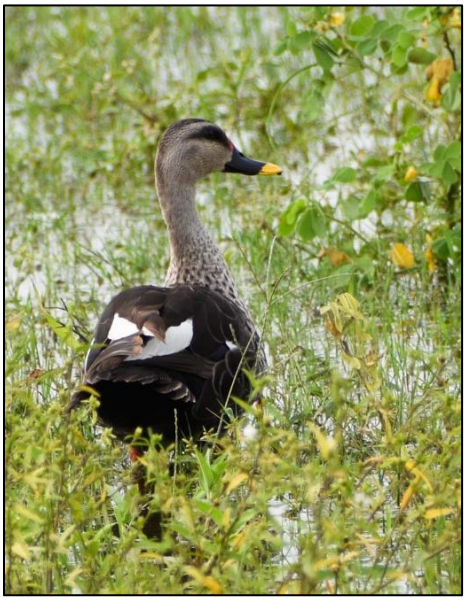
Painted Stork

In the first week of October I got a chance to visit one of the very popular birding destinations in Hyderabad – Ameenpur Lake. The lake is around 30 kilometers from Hyderabad. I had heard that in the month of October the lake teems with migratory birds and was hoping to spot quite a few.

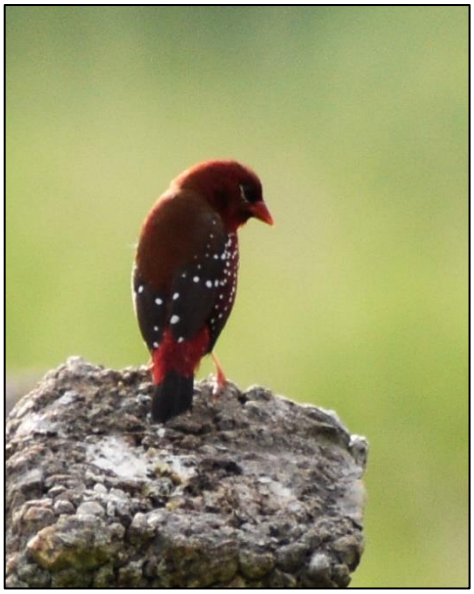
Indian Silverbill

Spot-billed Pelican

During my four-hour visit I was able to spot almost 15 species of birds and tried to photograph most of them. Out of these I spotted at least 9 new species of birds. It was my first time birding at a water body and I fully enjoyed it.



Spot-billed Duck



Red Avadavat

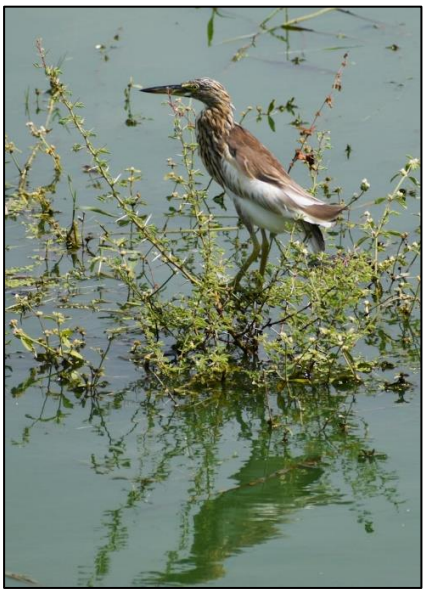
There were lots of birds of various species and that enabled me to photograph them from a lot of different perspectives. I thoroughly enjoyed the trip and learnt a lot about birding and photographing birds.

The list of birds seen at Ameenpur is given below:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Indian Robin	*Saxicoloides fulicatus*	8	Black-headed Ibis	*Threskiornis melanocephalus*
2	Painted Stork	*Mycteria leucocephala*	9	Indian Spot-billed Duck	*Anas poecilorhyncha*
3	Indian Silverbill	*Euodice malabarica*	10	Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark	*Eremopterix griseus*
4	Spot-billed Pelican	*Pelecanus philippensis*	11	Wood Sandpiper	*Tringa glareola*
5	Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus Himantopus*	12	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*
6	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*	13	Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*
7	Red Avadavat	*Amandava amandava*			

Some other birds photographed during the trip:

Glossy Ibis



Indian Pond Heron

Green Bee-eater

Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark

Black-winged Stilt

Black-headed Ibis

Indian Robin

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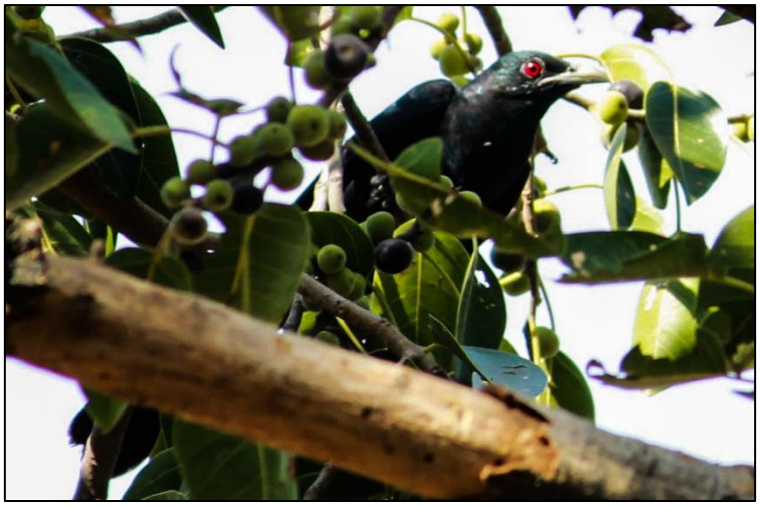
LOOKING BACK AT ANANTHAGIRI

Text & Photos: Ambika Pradhan



Asian Koel male

It all started with the new-born dawn, grey, dull and overcast, giving way to thick water heavy clouds that quickly turned the morning to dusk, dark and carrying a heavy silence of the impending downpour that was round the corner. I was drenched in no time, but I did not spare a moment to stop somewhere, until the deluge passed – I had to keep going. Soon, the dawn reclaimed what rightfully belonged to it. Now, the only thing on my mind was to reach the destination on time, before the birds I'd never seen flew away. Drab, dull urban structures were soon replaced by lush green pastures, roads lined with age-old trees that looked like old wise forest lords.

When I finally arrived at the destination, I found myself in what I'd say was a crayon drawing: pastels of blue sky, and overly saturated sun, surrounded by trees that were teeming with life that left me eager and restless.

In less than 10 minutes, I spotted nearly 5 new species I'd only ever seen in bird guides and Google images.

"Oh, you're what they call Yellow-footed Green Pigeon? Pleasure indeed to meet you, good sire".

"Now I see you, now I don't. No wonder they call you Leafbird. Glad to make your acquaintance."

"Ah, the graceful Hornbill flying overhead, we meet after all!"

These were the dialogues running in my head, while spotting the diverse bird life.

Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker

This is how vividly I remember the first time I visited Ananthagiri Hills for birding. Life everywhere you'd care to look. Birders had only started arriving, but a sense of conquest filled me, for I had arrived early and spotted so many lifers in a short span of time. That morning, nearly 5 years ago, is etched in my memory – a bright July morning spent watching the Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, an Orange-headed Thrush, some Leafbirds and Yellow-footed Green Pigeons.

Yellow-footed Green Pigeon

Over the years, Ananthagiri has come to become my go-to place for a good day of woodland birding. As soon as you enter Vikarabad, or even on the way, raptors begin to greet you. Sometimes, if one has the luck, Short-toed Snake Eagle and Indian Spotted Eagle grace with their presence over the fields, hovering in all their glory. What a sight it is, as a raptor glides above stretching out its mighty wingspan!

As a teenager flipping through Dr Salim Ali's Book of Indian Birds, I had been awestruck by the sheer beauty of Asian Paradise-flycatcher and thought it was an elusive bird that I would spend years searching for. But, only a few years later, while birding in Ananthagiri, a flash of white flew right into the shafts of sunlight that fell between the two trees. That flash of white turned out to be the Paradise-flycatcher, a moment of celebration for me back then, as it still is today.

Come Bird Race, Ananthagiri would be one of the first spots we'd plan to go, year after year. The Bird Race was a time to socialise with other birders from the city and everybody would gush about the legend of the Brown Fish Owl at Ananthagiri and how it would always be perched atop the mango tree at the entrance of the forest. And a couple of years after listening to the legend, while participating in the Bird Race, I finally did manage to spot the Brown Fish Owl!

Crimson Rose pair mating

In these COVID times, locked up inside the house, I find myself thinking of Ananthagiri more often than not. When the restriction lifts, would we still enjoy birding like we did Before Covid, sans sanitizers, masks and the constant fear of being infected? One lives in hope!

Indian Grey Hornbill

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Baby Sparrow On My Stoop

Louise Fairley

Summoned to my screen door:
an insistent vocalise
punching through bird-chatter,
fledgling artist thirsty
for attention, untutored
in vocal technique.
Testing independence, yet

too naïve to be chary
of me looming in the doorway.
Emphatic cheeping paused,
you preen a riotous
thistledown of baby feathers;
turning, fix me with your
penetrating eye.

Devoted mother, patiently
swaying on the daylily,
awaits her turn at the feeder,
gleaning soggy seeds pounded
to mush by last night's torrents.
I was about to empty
the mess, not knowing it was
just right for baby birds.
At your summons, she returns
again and again.

Soon you will do this for yourself;
become sleek, chatty, self-assured,
indistinguishable
from the cohort of sparrows
frequenting my yard.
The thought of which leaves me

vaguely bereft.

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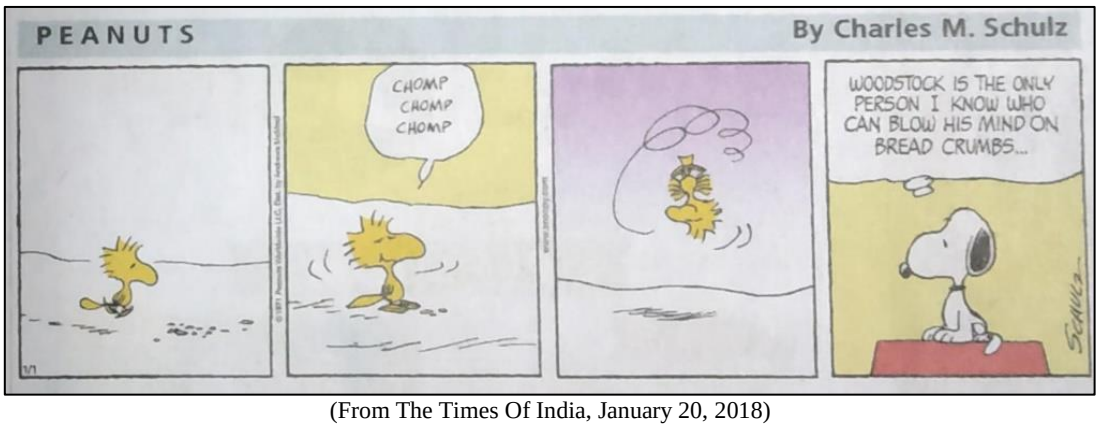
Bird Humour

Umesh Mani


PEANUTS
By Charles M. Schulz
CHOMP CHOMP CHOMP
WOODSTOCK IS THE ONLY PERSON I KNOW WHO CAN BLOW HIS MIND ON BREAD CRUMBS...
SCHULZ

(From The Times Of India, January 20, 2018)

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Bird of the Month

Text and Photo: Umesh Mani

Black Bulbul (*Hypsipetes leucocephalus*)

Black Bulbul (Sattal, June 7, 2018)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Pycnonotidae
Genus: *Hypsipetes*
Species: *H. leucocephalus*
Size: 24-25 cm

Description & distribution: The Black Bulbul, also known as the Asian Black Bulbul or Himalayan Black Bulbul, is a passerine that has ten subspecies currently recognized, and is found in southern Asia, from north-eastern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan across northern, central and north-eastern India east to Myanmar, central, southern and south-eastern China, Taiwan and Sri Lanka. The plumage varies from a glossy black to slaty grey overall, depending on the subspecies, and with the underparts being slightly lighter than the upperparts. The head is black and has a fluffy crest, while the bill, legs and feet are bright orange. The tail has a slight fork. The sexes are similar, but younger birds have whitish underparts with a grey breast-band, brownish upperparts and do not have the crest. They may also have a black streak behind the eyes and on the ear coverts. Three of the subspecies found in China – *H. l. stresemanni*, *H. l. leucothorax* and *H. l. leucocephalus* – have white heads. The birds of the Western Ghats belonging to the subspecies *H. l. ganeesa*, are also known as the Square-tailed Bulbul.

The Black Bulbul stays mainly in the hills but sometimes descends to the plains in winter.

Habitat & behaviour: The Black Bulbul prefers tall moist-deciduous and evergreen broad-leaved forests, gardens and cultivated areas. It is arboreal and is usually seen in small groups of 6 to 10, although sometimes more, either roosting in the canopies of tall forest trees, or flying around foraging for food. It is a noisy species, with flocks making a variety of sounds like cheeping, grating and mewing calls – *chirp*, *chee-chee-chee*, *whew-whe* etc. The Himalayan subspecies, *H. l. psaroides*, is also known to make a call like a goat kid. Its diet consists mainly of insects and seeds, and they are especially fond of berries like *Celtis*, *Rosa*, *Melia* and *Ehretia* in the Himalayas. They also partake of nectar from flowers like Rhododendron, *Salmalia*, *Erythrina* etc.

Nesting: The Black Bulbul breeds generally between May and July. The nest is a neat, though flimsy, cup made of grass, dead leaves, moss and lichen, bound with cobwebs, and lined with rootlets, fine grass etc, and built in a fork of a tree, at least 10m above the ground. The usual clutch consists of 2-4 pale pink eggs, blotched all over with red-brown, purple-brown and grey.

Local name: The Black Bulbul is known as *'Kala bulbul'* in Hindi and Marathi, *'Kaki'* in Pahari, *'Karuppu kondai kuruvi'* in Tamil, *'Myna-bulbul'* in Malayalam and *'Dao-bulip gashim'* in Cachari.

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For Private Circulation Only
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